DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 094 210 CE 001 732

AUTHOR	Meyer, Norma, Ed.
TITLE	The Organizing Center: n Instrument for Implementing Life-Centered Education.
INSTITUTION	Northern Illinois Univ., De Kalb. ABLE Model Program.
SPONS AGENCY	Illinois State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Springfield. Div. of Vocational and Technical Education.
PUB DATE	[74]
NOTE	32p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.85 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Education; *Curriculum Planning; Educational Planning; Elementary Grades; *Learning Laboratories; *Task Analysis; Teacher Influence
IDENTIFIERS	*ABLE Model Program; Organizing Centers

ABSTRACT

An organizing center, this 32-page publication points out, is not a "learning center" in the sense of having one area reserved for clay modeling or the construction of mobiles. It is, rather, more like the central thought of a story and is considered a method for planning activity-focused teaching units in which the teacher is the key to successful instruction. Attractively illustrated, the publication explains several concepts important to the organizing center: (1) Planning can be carried out in terms of work to be done, e.g., a bakery involves the work of the baker, the clerk, the entrepreneur, and the wholesale supply salesman; (2) new images of teaching can be developed through the use of the organizing center; and (3) it helps people communicate about the work of teaching. The booklet also reports on a teacher's first use of the organizing center program and how it motivated a special summer project. (NH)

ED 094210

THE ORGANIZING CENTER

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AN INSTRUMENT FOR IMPLEMENTING

LIFE-CENTERED EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

©

ABLE Model Program
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Walter Wernick
ABLE Model Program
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

CE 001 732

PREFACE

This publication draws from many other materials produced by ABLE Model Program, a research and development project funded by the Division of Vocational and Technical Education, State of Illinois. The original idea of the organizing center was developed early in the project's first stage and field tested by classroom teachers in DeKalb, Long Grove, Mundelein, and Wheeling. Teachers shared their plans with us and our concepts were refined throughout 1970-1972. Professional educational workers in many parts of the United States have since found the organizing center approach helpful in planning and implementing career development programs. This summary of our work with the concept describes our research work in such a broad educational setting.

Dr. Norma Meyer was the major editor of this piece. Art work was done by Bill Coulter, Glidden School, DeKalb. Other contributors were Doris Miller and Sandra Anderson of Long Grove, Dave Yeck, and Mary Stell Alessia. All 1972-73 project staff assisted in the production.

Dr. Walter Wernick
Project Director

CONTENTS

The Organizing Center Concept 1

What Is an Organizing Center?
The Teacher is the Key to Instruction.
Three Dimensions of Planning are Involved.

The Organizing Center and Career Education 6

Career Education Utilizes the World of Work as an Organizing Center.
"Living Content" is Available Through Community Resources.
Planning Can Be Carried Out in Terms of Work to be Done.
Interviewing Provides a Means for Direct Inquiry.

Sample Plans Organized Around The-Person-in-the-Occupation . 11

The Bakery Involves the Work of the Baker, the Clerk, the Entrepreneur, and the Wholesale Supply Salesman
An ABLE Teacher Tells How Activities Were Planned.

Significance for Administrators and Curriculum Planners . . . 19

"Change Agents" can Create New Images of Teaching Through Use of the Organizing Center.
The Organizing Center Approach can be Developed in a Variety of Settings.
The Organizing Center Helps People Communicate About the Work of Teaching

ABLE-Teacher Reactions to the Organizing Center 23

An Elementary Teacher Reports on Her First Use of the Program.
Work-As-An-Organizing-Center-for-Learning Motivates a Special Summer Project.
A New Staff Member Meets an ABLE Teacher.

THE ORGANIZING CENTER CONCEPT

"Everything starts with an idea."
-Jung

An Organizing Center Is An Ideational Tool.

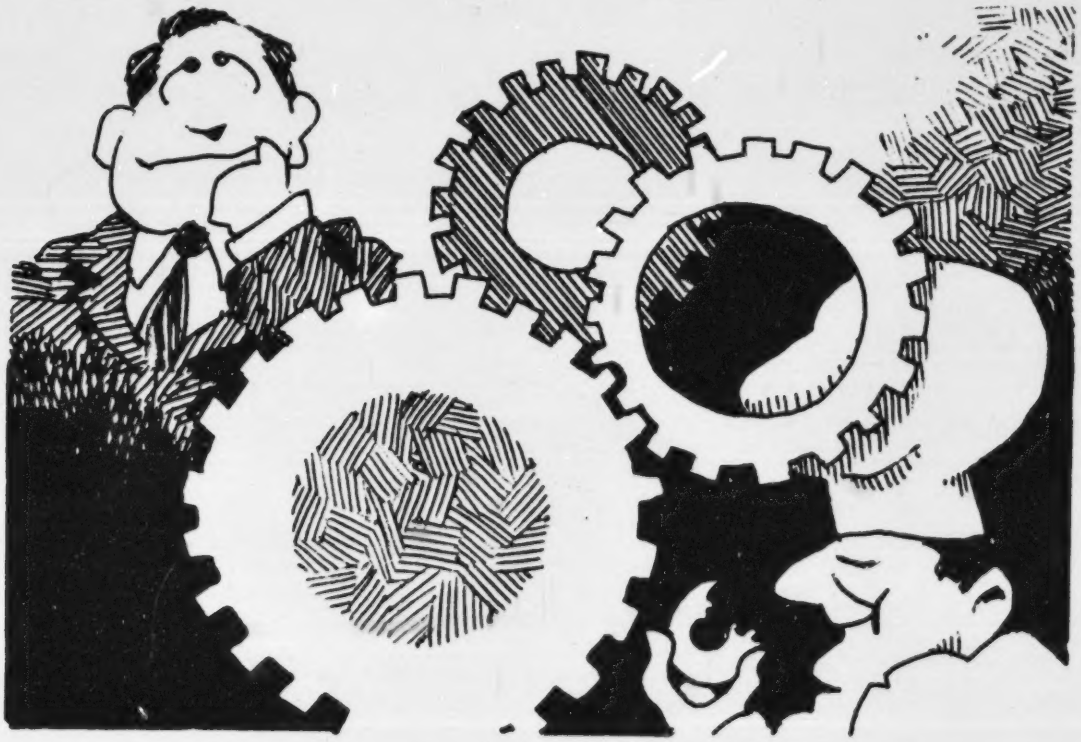
The use of "centers" is well established within educational practice, and the concept of a center as a means for organization is not really new. "Learning Centers" are common in elementary schools, and elementary teachers are also familiar with the "activity centers"--having one area of the classroom for painting, another for clay, another for reading, for science, etc. They know how the provision of these centers can act as an organizing force for classroom management, i.e. if there is a clay center, children and teachers expect modeling to take place in that area of the classroom. Teachers also know that the activity center concept encourages a flexible schedule and free movement within the room; its utilization often results in the adoption of corollary concepts, attitudes and skills.

Most teachers can readily see how a "center" can contribute toward organization of free learning experiences; they have been oriented toward thinking of a center as a place. However, teachers may find it a little difficult at first to understand the term "organizing center" where the word "center" belongs not to the physical, but to the cognitive realm. The organizing center is an ideational tool--more akin to the "central thought" in a story or essay than it is to the "Learning Center." Organizing Center should be considered as a method for planning activity-focused teaching units. The concept as we see it, helps teachers think in a more organized way.

The Teacher is the Key to Instruction.

The concept of the organizing center as a technical tool for teaching was originated and developed by ABLE Model Program. Significant aspects of instructional planning were identified and placed in a structure which organizes thinking along specific, productive lines of thought. Our strategy has been to work with the teacher's imagination rather than to provide a collection of texts, workbooks, films, filmstrips, and other programmed materials as a library of instructional resources.

Our approach is openly teacher-oriented. We believe the teacher's imagination is the key instrument of instruction. Consequently, ABLE materials are designed to focus the teacher's imagination upon specific elements of his work. Our model tries to capture the imagination of the teacher as it brings various elements of the instructional process into focus, and then shifts them about in kaleidoscopic fashion to produce "practical" plans. By practical, we mean what the teacher believes can be done under his direction, in his class setting, and with his group of students.



The beginning point for this method of planning, then, is the teacher, more specifically, the teacher's creative imagination. An IDEA emerging from this creative imagination forms the nucleus of the teaching plan; it becomes the "center" around which the plan is organized. This is an appropriate beginning point for the instructional process, since ideas are the professional stock and trade of teachers. A creative professional teacher, dealing with ideas, can utilize a child's strong interest to teach a variety of "lessons." For example, when a group of children became concerned over the removal of a certain tree from the play yard, one creative teacher saw that tree as a focus for teaching lessons in math, language arts, social studies, and art, as well as lessons in science. Any idea that the teacher sees as appropriate is a possible nucleus for a teaching unit.

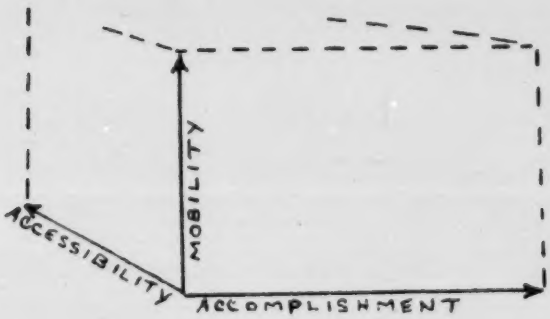
Three Dimensions of Planning are Involved.

Once a teacher's idea becomes a center for planning, specific planning follows three questions:

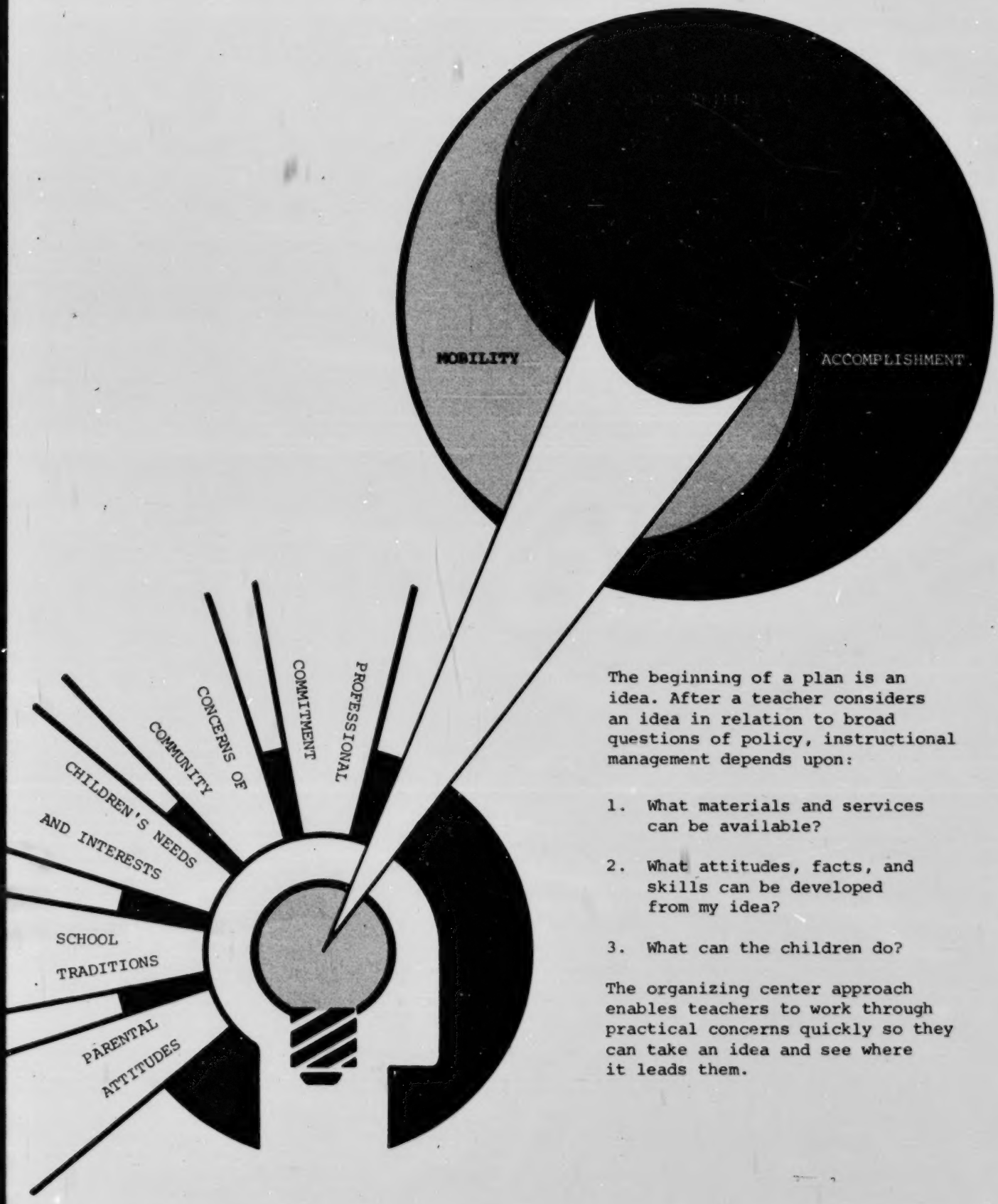
* What content areas will emerge from this idea (for these learners at this time)?
* What materials, people, and places can be available (in connection with this idea to personalize this content for my students)?
* What can the learners do (with the idea and resources to learn the content)?

Each question leads to a dimension of thinking about practical teaching concerns. Thinking through these questions, a teacher can easily develop a solid, three-dimensional plan. The first dimension has been labeled mobility because it is within this dimension that ideas begin to move into an active relationship within the teacher's mind. The other dimensions have been identified as accessibility and accomplishment.

The following diagram was used during the early development of ABLE Model Program to suggest how these dimensions--although moving out in different directions--all relate to the same starting point. It also suggests how they interact and operate simultaneously to form a concrete, structured plan.



As the project's ideas were tested by a variety of teachers in actual classrooms, illustrations and diagrams became more concrete and specific. During the second year of the project, another form was created to express the developmental and spiralling nature of the ideational instrument. The diagram on the following page was frequently used to help present the concept of the organizing center to new teachers.



The beginning of a plan is an idea. After a teacher considers an idea in relation to broad questions of policy, instructional management depends upon:

1. What materials and services can be available?

2. What attitudes, facts, and skills can be developed from my idea?

3. What can the children do?

The organizing center approach enables teachers to work through practical concerns quickly so they can take an idea and see where it leads them.

This outline helped ABLE staff and teachers to share their thinking while organizing structured plans.

IDEA: _____

I. Mobility
   - A. Language arts
   - B. Math
   - C. Social Studies
   - D. Science

II. Accessibility
   - A. People
   - B. Places
   - C. Materials

III. Accomplishment
   - A. Displays, such as
     1. Bulletin boards
     2. Experience charts
   - B. Written expression, such as
     1. Individualized booklets
     2. Letters
     3. School newsletter
   - C. Oral expression, such as
     1. Reports from research or personal experience
     2. Telephone calls for arranging class visits
     3. Introduction of speakers
     4. Interviews
     5. Tape recordings, as for outside interviews
   - D. Sharing activities, such as
     1. Reports from small groups about mini-trips
     2. Presentations to other classes
     3. Projects involving other students as "customers"
     4. Open houses

THE ORGANIZING CENTER AND CAREER EDUCATION

"Methinks I see my father ... In my mind's eye."
-Shakespeare

Career Education Utilizes the World of Work as an Organizing Center.

Although the organizing center concept can be used for any instructional focus desired by a teacher, it is particularly suitable for the purposes of career education. ABLE researchers propose that the organizing center for instructional planning be the "person-in-the occupation." In this way life-centered goals are introduced into the regular curriculum, as a viable heart rather than as an add-on program or as a substitution for the existing program.

Career education means a refocusing upon people. People become the basis for a life-centered program; people become the organizing center for instructional plans; people become the vehicle for learning. The organizing center approach facilitates this focus upon people; it stimulates doing activities, multi-sensory experiences, inquiry, and value clarification--all necessary ingredients for effective career development. This method of planning helps a teacher manage learning activities relevant to a child's life and his contemporary culture.

"Living Content" is Available Through Community Resources.

Children have a natural interest in the activities of adults. Their wonder of what the future holds for them and their active search for worthwhile expression thrusts them into positive learning roles when they have contact with working adults. Thus, providing opportunities for such contact with the adults in their own community and helping children to inquire from these primary sources are significant educational goals. Traditional subjects (the 3 R's) can be learned effectively by involving students in the work activities of the adult world because the "content" of an occupation gives the teacher a variety of instructional choices and allows focus upon life's activities. Introducing the human element into instruction--through a focus upon real people--infuses the curriculum with active knowledge; the dynamism of people drives inert content from the learning environment.

The organizing center concept allows teachers to plan people-oriented activities within their regular ongoing curricular structure. The Accessibility dimension of a teacher's plan encourages attention to the use of community resources--especially the people of the community. (Also, because the children's parents are considered a primary part of the community, a natural means is provided for parent involvement in the educational process.) The organizing center approach pulls the teacher away from being an assistant to textbooks and directs planning energies toward "doing" activities--utilizing significant printed matter, visual imagery, and direct experience from the real world. With organizing centers formed from life's activities, teachers can plan, implement, and evaluate relevant instruction.

Planning Can be Carried Out in Terms of Work to be Done. Thinking in terms of Mobility (inter-relationships among skills, activities, and the organizing idea), Accessibility (available resources), and Accomplishment (practical activities that can be easily evaluated) provides a framework for planning and helps a teacher think in terms of work that has to be done. The following list suggests some of the factors that a teacher might consider within each of these three dimensions of the plan:

Three-Dimensional Planning for Life-Centered Education

As teachers plan to meet their practical needs they usually think through considerations such as:

Mobility:

* Can the reasons for instruction and their clarity for the learner, and the parent be evident?

* Can the force generated by the idea pull together new relationships from past studies, and contribute to new learning in academic areas?

* Can the idea meet or generate the interests of the child?

* Can a child work at his own pace and at his own accomplishment level?

* Can a child learn to encounter the fundamental life activities of his community, contemporary world?

* Can a child learn to delve through time and cultures to build an appreciation of his heritage?

* What effect can the content have upon the child's self-image, as a person who is creating his human biography each new day?

Accessibility:

* With what human talent can the child interact?

* What tools can the child use to uncover information?

* What physical facilities can be available for the child's use to study alone, to work in groups, to observe, to practice?

* What materials can be available for the child's use in the daily course of instruction?

* What sensory stimuli can the child encounter?

* Can the child's own thoughts and feelings be utilized as a basis for his own reflection or action?

Accomplishment:

* Can the child's achievements, and the feedback he can receive be visible?

* In which ways can the child be encouraged to use different resources?

* What opportunities can there be for the child to express himself and what he is learning--to the teacher, to his peers, to his parents, to the community?

* In which ways can products of learning be stored, reviewed, redone?

* What means can there be for evaluating the child's learning and achievement, including contributions that the child can make to the evaluating process?

Interviewing Provides a Means for Direct Inquiry. In an age when memorization of facts is totally inadequate for handling the amount of information a person may need during his lifetime, other methods must be found for making information available. The ability to locate information in available resource materials and the ability to inquire directly from people have become more important than ever before. Interviewing is a practical means of personal inquiry.

When the organizing center for instruction is "people," interviewing is a natural means of teaching part of the skills needed for productive inquiry. Interviewing also provides a "doing" activity where learning can be more active than passive.

If tape recorders are used--and simple tape recorders are well within the operating abilities of most elementary children--the complete interview situation can be reviewed later, either for content or as a tool for learning more sophisticated interviewing skills. Once a child learns the operation of a tape recorder and becomes confident of his ability to interview, he can conduct interviews independently and then share the actual interview with his classmates.

Older children may profit more by learning to take notes during an interview. This method forces the interviewer to listen discriminately, to select significant information, and to summarize--all of which are valuable skills in our contemporary society. Whichever method of recording is used, it is important that the interview be recorded--in such a way that students can make reference to the information during class discussion. Discussion can provide feedback for evaluating the activity as well as help in relating the ideas explored in the interview to previous activities.

SAMPLE PLANS

ORGANIZED AROUND THE-PERSON-IN-THE-OCCUPATION

The Bakery Involves the Work of the Baker,
the Clerk, the Entrepreneur, and
the Wholesale Supply Salesman.

How many times have you heard a child ask, "May I have a cookie?" Have you ever thought of this everyday occurrence as an instrument to further a child's intellectual development?

Baking, as an organizing center, offers the classroom teacher many significant topics that can be enjoyed as they are studied. In fact, almost any product or process that has to do with food is a "natural" for children, and it's easy to promote this area of human endeavor since perfecting techniques for raising, handling, preparing, or eating food has been a life-long enterprise for many adults.

BAKER

ACCESSIBILITY

Baker
Bakery
Recipes
Kitchen utensils
Baking ingredients
Library materials (including film, filmstrips, tapes, etc.)

MOBILITY

Baking (skills: baking, decorating; training - schooling; working conditions - sanitary regulations)
Tools and technology (past and present)
Mathematical skills (fractions, measuring, weight, volume)
Chemistry (effects of temperatures)
Vocabulary development

ACCOMPLISHMENT

Handle tools used by the baker
Demonstrate skills used by the baker through puppetry
Compare home baking (baking from scratch, frozen and prepared foods) with "bought" bread
Compute amounts of ingredients in sample recipes
Outline steps for personal baking experience at home
Report on the chemistry involved in baking (oral or written form)
Draw pictures of the baker at work

CLERK

ACCESSIBILITY	Clerk Bakery Dictionary Cook books Library materials
MOBILITY	Customer-clerk relations Mathematical skills (money changing) Health standards Ethnical baking - customs of cultures
ACCOMPLISHMENT	Roleplay clerk and customer ordering quantities of baking products Construct a model retail bakery Detail sanitary habits and codes in a public establishment Figure money exchanges Figure quantities of bakery products for parties Exhibit samples (and word lists) of ethnical baking Taste ethnical products and describe appearances and tastes Make a mural of bakery products advertised in newspapers and magazines Read aloud vignettes from "literature" wherein baking processes or products are described

ENTREPRENEUR

ACCESSIBILITY	Owner of the bakery (entrepreneur) Employees of municipal health department Bakery Library materials
MOBILITY	Planning and design of a bakery (assembly line) Economic factors (labor, cost of materials, equipment costs, overhead, profit) Capitalism Technology - past and present (tools and equipment) Sanitary laws - government Ethnical aspects - culture (Italian, Jewish, Bohemian, Swedish) Delivery methods (home, supermarket)
ACCOMPLISHMENT	Roleplay employer interviewing prospective employees Display selected baking developments from past to present Explain health standards and function of government agencies Interview people from different ethnical groups about customs, tools, and products for articles in school newspaper Exhibit samples of ethnical baking Illustrate profit, loss, and gain in graph form Construct a model assembly line Use new terminology in written work Chart routes of delivery

WHOLESALE SUPPLY SALESMAN

ACCESSIBILITY	Wholesale salesman of bakery Order forms Products used in baking (sugar, flour, salt) Farms Processing plant Library materials
MOBILITY	Original and manufactured sources of baking ingredients Processing of raw products into marketable items Transportation (packaging, routes, storaging) Mathematical skills (computation of orders using volume, weight, and prices) Economics (wholesale and retail)
ACCOMPLISHMENT	Make and discuss produce maps Exhibit the transformation of raw products into finished marketable items Illustrate transportation methods in chart form Interview salesmen and housewives about ingredients to make certain products for article Figure (mock) wholesale and retail costs Analyze graphs and report sales figures Use technical vocabulary of baking product salesmen in oral or written reports Write articles for school newspaper Arrange class bake sale

An ABLE Teacher Tells How Activities Were Planned.

"I had used the person-in-the-occupation as an organizing center during the previous year, and I knew that this model provided an excellent way to teach the same content I had been teaching from textbooks--but to teach it 'live' so to speak. As I began planning for the fall, I decided that I wanted to use 'people' as the organizing center for the whole curriculum in my second grade class.

"I knew that I wanted to begin the year with science because that would capture a natural interest of children this age, and I could see it leading right into a health unit also. I also decided that the best 'theme' for the first six weeks would be 'Animals and How they Grow' and 'People and How They Grow.' I knew that the children I would meet in my new class would be in the 'WHY?' stage, and I wanted to capitalize upon that natural curiosity.

"As I thought about what I wanted to accomplish during those first weeks of school, I thought of two friends of mine who would make excellent resource persons. One was a chemist and could demonstrate the scientific method for my students, as well as fascinate them with dramatic experiments. The other was a nutritionist who could help me lead into our health unit. I called them and found that they would be glad to visit my class, and so I continued to plan the activities for the first two weeks around these people.

"For lead-up activities, I would introduce the scientific method as used in the second grade. We would talk about it and then the children would write about and illustrate this method of discovery. During this same period the children would learn interview skills and practice them in small conversation groups.

"I wanted to get started with phonics right away, too, and so I planned for each child to make an alphabet book about working people: Astronauts, Bakers, Construction Workers, etc. This would serve as a basis for phonics instruction and would also start my students wondering about the people who did these various kinds of work. To help me learn the children's backgrounds and to partially answer some of these questions, I planned a second book to be called 'My Family at Work.' One page would tell about the father's work, another about the mother's, and others about each brother, sister, the student himself, and any other members of his particular family. We would learn while doing these booklets that families are different and that everybody has work skills that he can contribute within a group.

"In more direct preparation for the classroom visit by the chemist, the children would undertake a "scientific" activity--and think of themselves as being scientists. I would introduce the orders of animals, but we would concentrate on insects. The children could make their own jars, and with a little help at classification could start their own insect collections.

"I planned thank-you letters as part of the follow-up and also asked the learning center director to pull all books, film strips, film loops, pictures, etc. pertaining to animals, insects, science, and scientists. These materials would be used during the follow-up period when students would be preparing individual reports. In class periods we would learn definitions of words that came up during the visit. I would also decide during the visit what experiment might be best for the children to carry out so that they could immediately practice some of the things they would learn.

"During the first week of school we were busy getting ready for this first visit. When the day finally arrived, the children were ready and eagerly anticipating what a real scientist would be like. The visit was not a disappointment! Dr. Thompson performed experiments

and the children could observe some very immediate results when various chemicals are mixed. She also told us about the work of a scientist and about her job in particular. She explained her tools, and she showed some of them to the class. The children asked questions that they had prepared and others that were stimulated by the talk.

"The children were delighted with their visitor, and were eager to express their reactions. While the children wrote experience summaries and prepared individual reports, we also began our experiment with Monarch butterflies. In addition, we were already beginning the health unit, leading up to a visit from the nutritionist. I introduced food groups, with the children also participating in the presentation, and we prepared collages which illustrated these food groups. A chapter from our health book would serve our purposes well and help the children learn basic health rules.

"By this time I had already contacted a veterinarian to visit our class and had begun to arrange for a field trip to the zoo. During conference time I had learned that one child's family would be glad to have our class visit their commercial apple orchard--and the children could pick a peck of apples. Because this would fit well with our discussion of foods, I began projecting ideas for including this trip also. One father who was a dentist had expressed his willingness to visit the class, and I decided an interview with him and with the school nurse would be included to fill out our health unit.

"It is hard to say where one unit began and the previous unit left off during this first six weeks of school. The first two weeks and the first two visits were planned during the summer, but once I learned the occupations of the students' parents, I discovered even more resources than I would be able to use. Each visit or field trip that we did include was selected because of its potential for demonstrating content that I wanted the children to learn. The year was a very exciting one for me because I became a director of many 'live performances.' We used no texts except for math and reading, and yet these children scored very well on the standard achievement tests administered. Even better, they enjoyed their school experiences and found their 'work' as students an interesting challenge."

SIGNIFICANCE FOR ADMINISTRATORS AND CURRICULUM PLANNERS

"Career Education is an idea whose time has come."
-Marland

"Change Agents" Can Create New Images of Teaching Through Use of the Organizing Center

The organizing center concept complements career education goals and facilitates their introduction into the teaching system. Because it has remained a concept and utilizes the individual teacher's skill with ideas, it is more easily introduced than a program with extensive materials and detailed teacher's guides.

Any teacher may think through and plan specific activities, using specific materials and services, specific content areas, and specific objectives. It is a flexible tool that teachers can apply to whatever extent desired. Some teachers who use the people-centered approach can manage to deal with the entire curriculum. Other teachers find it is not successful as a full-time venture, but regard it as a significant theme to be applied wherever possible. It need not be an all-or-nothing approach, but can rest comfortably upon the unique personal base of any teacher who tries it.

When the "person-in-the-occupation" is taken as the organizing center, for example, there is no master list of occupations to be studied nor even any particular number of occupations to be included. Some teachers might choose an occupation for an attitudinal reason while others might see a particular person-in-the-occupation as a stimulant to learning in a particular skill area, such as measuring. Because the method is based upon the stimulation and utilization of the teacher's creative imagination, there is no right way or wrong way to use it. It is not a separate program that the teacher substitutes for whatever he is doing now; it acts more as a developmental process, emphasizing the teacher's creative imagination and encouraging new ideas and actions.

The Organizing Center Frees Creative Energies And Provides for Effective Management

By providing structure for the teacher's own ideas, the organizing center frees individual talent and encourages its growth. The teacher is freed from the limitations of textbooks as individual planning skill increases and as other resources are utilized. Also, children's needs, interests, and abilities are more easily considered through the use of the organizing center, but at the same time the teacher's professional judgment remains at the center of the plan. The planning structure includes children's interests but does not depend upon them for its initial conception or follow-through.

In a very real sense, the only person a teacher can control is himself. The methods and materials that a teacher uses should help him be more skillful, more humane, and more self-confident. Most teachers need to have a structure for their thoughts about instruction; they need to feel confident that they will be able to provide the materials and services necessary for learning activities. Planning through the organizing center sets practical, specific objectives for the teacher as well as for the students. It can help supply the confidence and the managerial skill to teach by the motto: "Take an idea and see where it leads you!"

The Organizing Center Approach Can Be Developed in a Variety of Settings.

The organizing center concept can be learned from one or two workshops or conferences, or even from printed materials. It can begin as soon as a teacher feels ready, because it fits into the existing curriculum with no major restructuring required. And because the method is teacher oriented--beginning from the teacher's point of view and meeting the teacher's needs first of all--it can be seen as an opportunity and a challenge rather than a threat. Its organizational power aids planning and management for the teacher, the administrator, the curriculum planner, and the developer of career education programs.

The ABLE Model for Career Education, including the organizing center method for planning, is being implemented by many schools in Illinois and is now beginning to be adopted in schools of many other states as well. It has been adopted extensively in two system-wide projects: in the "People of Peoria" project, involving all of the elementary schools in Peoria, Illinois, and in "Project People," involving the schools of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

In both cases a cadre of teachers attended two-week and four-week summer workshops, respectively, where the project guides were written. These cadre teachers, in turn, held training sessions within their particular schools during the following year. These projects have a director, a counselor, and full school-board backing. On the other hand, there are schools where one or two teachers are carrying out the concept with no greater backing than their principal's approval. In fact, it must be recognized that many outstanding teachers were employing the same dimensions of thought long before the organizing center concept was ever developed formally to the point of having a name.

The Organizing Center Helps People Communicate About the Work of Teaching

The intellectual instrument enables teachers from a wide variety of school environments to discuss the work that teachers must do in order to plan quality learning experiences. It can be used to discuss planning or implementation without tying all ideas to a narrow age or grade level, and also encourages discussants to pursue relationships they might not have been able to fit within their usual subject-schedule planning format. As communication about significant aspects of teaching increases among teachers, planners, and administrators, more and better support systems can be provided by a school and greater use can be made of those systems already available.

In introducing the approach, workshop leaders should involve teachers as active participants in practical activities. For example, teachers may be presented with an object and asked to brainstorm--thinking of all the people and various work roles that would have been involved in the production of the item. For example, teachers might be asked to think about a donut:

People Involved in Producing a Donut	--wheat growers --flour millers --sugar producers --wholesale suppliers --bakery owners and managers --equipment manufacturers --pastry chefs --clerks --cleaning personnel --health inspectors --delivery truck drivers --grocers etc.

Teachers may be asked to develop a unit plan using the organizing center approach, and they may be asked to roleplay their students. Small-group work as well as question-and-answer periods can help the workshop leader determine how well the participants have understood the organizing center concepts.

Teachers often wonder where they will find people who are willing to serve as learning resources. An experienced ABLE teacher can answer their specific questions and reassure those new to the program that such people are usually accessible. Discussions can also center around ways of communicating with parents, who provide an excellent resource group, and around resource files that can be set up in the school as the program develops.

An enthusiastic workshop leader can generate enthusiasm for the program within almost any group of teachers, particularly if he himself has seen the program in operation. Slide presentations from classrooms using the program are helpful, especially if they can be presented by the teacher who planned and carried out the unit. The major objective is to help teachers "see" what the use of people-as-an-organizing-center can do for classroom instruction.

ABLE-TEACHER REACTIONS TO THE ORGANIZING CENTER

Delightful task: to rear the tender thought,
to teach the young idea how to shoot.
-James Thompson

An Elementary Teacher Reports On Her First Use of the Program

"As the year draws to a close, I find enough experiences behind me to begin evaluating the World of Work and what it has done for my classroom.

"To begin with, I would like to explain how we used the World of Work in our second grade classroom. Through trial and error we found that not enough interest was generated or skills taught when we tried having one visitor per week. It seemed to be 'too confusing' and 'too much.' We would just get rolling on one project and then have to lay it aside and begin a new project. Our class this year is one that enjoys long term special contracts and projects. By having too many people in to explain about their occupations, not enough time was available for research before the next visitor was 'knocking at the door.' We then found that by spending several weeks exploring all areas, for example of the building industry, it spurred more special interest groups and more individual project involvement. It also gave us more time to interview several people who might be performing the same job. This the children did on their own and brought back their findings to be shared with the whole classroom.

"Each Friday we shared our interviews with each other and compared our findings. Children learned interviewing skills very quickly as they listened to those around them and evaluated each others' findings. They found out what was important to know and what was of little or no interest.

"As a classroom teacher, I learned that spending more time with each occupational exploration allowed planning time for certain skills that evolved from a particular project. I could also take time to individualize assignments so that all children were not doing the same thing at the same time. During our Friday sharing time I found these individualized assignments to be invaluable for the shy, quiet, often non-involved child. The World of Work also promoted a higher interest level for learning basic second grade material because the program correlates with many fields (math, science, social studies, health, reading, language arts, etc.). What more could a teacher ask for?

"Because of spending many weeks on each project, we were able to research all of the occupations needed to build and sell real estate. We found out how many people it took to run a veterinary hospital and how we use animals in research. We scratched the surface of O'Hare Field and found that fifteen different occupations were needed to get our pilot, Mr. Chandler, off the ground and flying his American Airlines Boeing 727. Consequently, material never runs out, just time, the teacher, or both!

"As a teacher involved in the World of Work, I have found hundreds of avenues of learning opened, many yet to be researched. I have also discovered that a program such as this must be tailored for each incoming group of students according to their special interests--no chance to become stagnant! One teacher may find her way of using the program entirely different than another teacher at the same grade level. That proves that the World of Work is a fine instrument for teaching because it allows a teacher to individualize herself as well as her students with regard to instruction.

"I am sorry to admit that you have only a random sampling of what really went on 'behind the scenes' in our classroom. Had I known ahead of time what the results would be on some of the projects my class accomplished, I would have made arrangements with parents to keep more of their work. I find it very difficult to ask a parent to part with a hand-made, hand-painted helicopter that looks so real it could fly. I guess that 'hind-sight' is better than 'no sight.'

"Our class has decided that they would like to end this year with a slide program especially for parents, to share with them some of our experiences while working with the World of Work. When we finish with the slides, we will send them to DeKalb, if you wish. We also have some materials from our flight project that you may have if you are interested.

"See you at EXPO '71 and thank you for allowing me the opportunity of participating in the World of Work. It has proven to be an invaluable experience for myself and my second graders."

Work-As-An-Organizing-Center-For-Learning Motivates A Special Summer Project

Many summer schools are run for the remedial reader, the slow student, or the disadvantaged student. If this assumption is correct, summer school should present students with an exciting, highly motivating learning situation. The methods used should be varied and individual. However, the summer program in many schools is "more of the same." Children are asked to attend, with the hope that more of the same will accomplish what the regular school program failed to do. If children have found the regular program insignificant, they will probably find such a summer program insignificant. How can this be changed?

A learning situation can be planned which is quite different from the usual; permitting active learning, using a variety of methods, and giving students a reason to learn. This discussion explains the development and implementation of a plan for teaching, using an occupation as the organizing center. The occupation of truck farming was originally proposed. Emphasis was placed on raising common vegetables from plants and the wholesale-retail selling of produce. This idea was further expanded by a team of summer school teachers to include a study of the migrant worker, food preparation, using the produce, canning of food, and lifestyle of migrant workers.

This interest-oriented plan, based on using an occupation as an organizing center for the curriculum, actually served two groups of children. Those enrolled in the regular year program were involved in preliminary activities contributing to the success of the summer school project. The summer session students carried the activities through. In both groups, interest and learning were measurable. During the month of May, regular-year students plotted and tilled a garden area on the school property. They discussed the prospects of yield, length of time to maturity, and opportunities to sell or use the production. This group agreed on which plants to purchase and borrowed the money from a school bank with every confidence that the outcome of the summer school project could repay this indebtedness with no difficulty.

By the start of summer school, the garden was growing and in excellent shape. One group of children immediately became involved in weeding, watering, and starting to harvest radishes and onions. Another group was getting ready for the visit of six migrant children who were to spend a week in our school. Others were preparing for canning some of the vegetables from the garden. Children were permitted to select the group in which they were most interested in working. The group of children working in the garden was out every morning picking the choice, ripe vegetables. They determined a fair price and were selling to teachers, parents, and others. They were also observing how plants blossom, how the fruit is attached, what plants produce their products underground, and how water affects plant growth and production. Many scientific and economic principles emerged from the sensory activities.

The group preparing for the migrant workers was involved in human relations to a degree generally not expected of children six to ten years of age. They explored the geographic locations of the homes of these children, their ethnic backgrounds, and what they could do to make these children comfortable. The highlight of this group activity occurred when the mother of one of the visitors came to school to make tortillas for everyone. Another group was involved in selecting which vegetables would lend themselves to canning, how such preservation of food is accomplished, the equipment used, and the health and safety standards necessary. The children visited a canning factory as well as several places which served both fresh and canned food. They made pickles and relishes, using cucumbers, onions and tomatoes.

During the last week of the summer session, with the garden still producing and the profits assured to repay the loan, all groups combined to plan a luncheon for parents. The buffet menu featured large trays of fresh tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, and dishes of relishes, and was supplemented with cold cuts and cheese purchased from the profits. The exciting thing to watch in activities such as these is children who are highly motivated and learn in many ways--but learn! It isn't difficult to see that these children were learning and using math, science, reading, communication skills, and social studies concepts in a relevant and useful way. They were also gaining in the affective areas. They demonstrated self-confidence, self-direction, and cooperative and independent learning.

A New Staff Member Meets an ABLE Teacher. "It was the end of the first week of orientation for our staff and my head was swimming with ABLE's approach to teaching. Teachers' and students' lives would be more enjoyable, meaningful, and so on. Dr. Wernick, the project director, was enthusiastic, but then it was his idea. Chuck Pryor, who had been with the project for a year, seemed pleased with what he had seen as he had worked in various schools.

"But the real worth of the idea could only be found in the words of a teacher who had actually tried it with the children as they lived with the nitty-gritty of everyday life in the classroom. Having been a teacher myself, I couldn't be convinced until I had heard how it worked out in practice.

"So it was that I appeared at the doorway of a third grade classroom one day after school in early September. This teacher used the idea of the florist as an organizing center last fall. I was told she could be of help to me in writing up a brochure.

"After we had introduced ourselves, I told her that I was getting ideas for a brochure on the workers in a floral shop. Her eyes lit up and she began talking about how she had become involved with the idea during the fall semester of the school year:

> 'The whole idea came about when the class was studying living things. The children thought it would be a good idea to plant seeds and watch them grow. So, my colleague across the hall and I decided to go along with it. They wanted to learn how to care for the plants so we decided to visit the grower at a greenhouse. The grower was most helpful and the children learned much that goes into producing the flowers sold at the floral shop. But we also found there are good seasons and bad for going to the greenhouse. Fall was not a good time; but around Christmas and Easter were good times.
>
> 'In the discussion that followed the visit to the greenhouse, the children decided to have a greenhouse sale. They made things to sell and brought additional materials from home.

'In the process of setting up the greenhouse the children learned many things needed to finance a new enterprise. They had to have a source of money so a discussion of the need for an initial investment led to the children's each contributing a nickel. This, in turn, brought on a discussion of taking out loans. They had to negotiate with the secretary to get change for the sale. Another decision that required planning was the number of hours they would be open on the day of the sale. When the day came they sold out in one half-hour, so we held a discussion concerning the need for the buyer to predict how much to buy and when to buy for resale.

'They made a total of $30. Naturally, there was much talk about how to spend it. Finally, they decided to use it to help stop pollution. An outdoor education teacher who taught in the school was invited to talk with us. The money was used to buy related books and filmstrips for the school library.

'The children felt so good about the outcome of the sale they wanted to have another sale in the spring. They had learned much from their previous experiences so the second endeavor came off more smoothly. This time they made $40 and decided to buy trees for the school yard. A resource person was invited in to advise them on how to buy trees and how to care for them. Since I have a multi-age group, some of the children who were involved last year have already asked to plant seeds this year.

'I really think the approach that the ABLE Model Program is advocating is a good one. A teacher can take as little time or as much time as she wishes on the organizing center and the children are so enthusiastic! They learn to make decisions, to plan together, to begin to see the relationship between what they are learning and real life. They are so pleased when a person comes to the class and speaks with them. One of the most rewarding things I learned was that the children thought of the good ideas and made them succeed.'

"We talked of other things related to ABLE such as the study of art which had led into so many directions. As I drove away from the school, I began to see that such phrases as "Take an idea and see where it leads you" and such terms as "accessibility," "mobility," and "accomplishment" could exist in the real world."

MEDIA PRODUCTIONS FROM ABLE MODEL PROGRAM

CAREER EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A Real Life Drama

(a brief introductory booklet, 14 pgs. $.75 single copies, $.50 for orders of ten or more)

IMPLEMENTING CAREER EDUCATION THROUGH ABLE MODEL PROGRAM

(an introductory booklet, 20 pgs. no charge)

FIRST STEPS: Planning a Career Development Activity in your Classroom

(practical suggestions for getting started, 60 pgs. $1)

CAREER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES THROUGH WORLD OF WORK RESOURCES

(a resource guide for teachers and educational workers, 160 pgs. $3)

INTRODUCING CAREER EDUCATION TO TEACHERS: A Handbook for Consultants, Workshop Leaders and Teacher Educators

(in looseleaf, 100 pgs. $5)

THE LEARNING CENTER: A Key Resource for Career Education

(mimeographed, 9 pgs. no charge)

PEOPLE HAVE CAREERS: A Primary Teacher Integrates Career Development In Basic Areas of the Curriculum

(an 11 minute, 16 mm sound/color film; order from N.I.U. Film Library. DeKalb, Illinois 60115)

For more information contact:

Dr. Walter Wernick, Director
ABLE MODEL PROGRAM
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois 60115
(815-753-1959)